



## Birchwood High School **16-19 Bursary Fund Policy 2025-26**

### **Statement of Intent**

At Birchwood High School, we are committed to closing the attainment gap between students from disadvantaged and more advantaged backgrounds, and ensuring that every young person participates in, and benefits from, a place in 16-19 education and training. The bursary is intended, therefore, to help eligible students with the essential costs of their studies, e.g. important books, equipment and travel costs.

We are dedicated to:

- Distributing 16-19 bursaries via a fair and equal process that is transparent, accountable, and easily understood.
- Ensuring that information regarding the application, award and administration of 16-19 bursaries is publicly available via the school website and sixth form administrator.
- Widening access to, and participation in, 16-19 education and training.
- Monitoring and reviewing our policies to ensure effectiveness.
- Setting high targets and objectives to develop a culture of continuous improvement.
- Ensuring adequate resources are available to implement policies, as much as is reasonably practicable.
- Sharing and acquiring best practice through partnerships with neighbouring settings.

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- DfE '16 to 19 bursary fund guide 2025 to 2026 academic year'
- Equality Act 2010

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Attendance and Absence Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Data Protection Policy

### **The School's Responsibilities**

The school will be responsible for setting eligibility criteria for students at the institution and will set conditions for receiving the bursary, such as regular attendance. Arrangements for applying for bursaries will be straightforward and confidential.

The needs of each student who applies for the bursary will be assessed by the setting and evidence will be obtained to support each application. The school will claim vulnerable bursaries from the Student Bursary Support Service (SBSS) for each eligible student.

Records will be kept by the setting of all assessments and payments. The application process will maintain confidentiality.

The setting will make this policy available early enough for students to be able to use the information when deciding which post-16 setting to attend.

The setting will comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 when setting its criteria and will not discriminate against students because of their protected characteristics.

The setting will inform the DfE of the total amount of any unspent funds (not previously reported) from any year up to and including the 2023/24 academic year, by completing the DfE [online enquiry form](#) no later than 31 March each year.

The setting will ensure it completes the new individualised learner record (ILR) or census fields to provide data on the number of students participating in extended work placements.

## What Is The 16-19 Bursary Fund?

The 16 to 19 Bursary Fund provides financial support to help students overcome specific barriers to participation so they can remain in education. The fund is made available from the government through the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and is administered by the school.

There are two types of 16-19 Bursary:

**Vulnerable** student bursary and **Discretionary** student bursary

## Who Is Eligible to Apply For 16-19 Bursary Funding?

- To be eligible to receive a bursary in the 2025 to 2026 academic year a student must be aged 16 or over but under 19 at 31 August 2026.
- Students must meet the residency criteria in [DfE funding regulations](#) for post-16 provision in the 2025 to 2026 academic year.

## How Does the School Assess Applications and Allocate 16-19 Bursary Funding?

The 16-19 Bursary Fund is a **limited fund** and the School only has a **small amount** of money to distribute. Students must fall into one of the following categories and students and their parents must be prepared to show evidence of genuine hardship.

- There will be 2 priority groups categorised as high & medium.
- For the 2025-26 academic year all applications must be received by **Friday 12 September 2025**.
- Consideration will be given for retrospective payments from the 1 September 2025
- Assessment of financial need is required for all applicants.

## How Does the School Pay Bursary Funding?

Payment may be in kind (for example by meeting the cost of a trip or providing uniform or a bus pass) or made by Bank transfer depending on the circumstances and purpose of the bursary.

### High priority group - Vulnerable student bursary

The School's eligibility criteria for receiving a vulnerable bursary will include students who are:

- LAC (this includes those classed as an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child)
- Previously LAC (PLAC)
- Receiving Income Support, or Universal Credit because they are financially supporting themselves or financially supporting themselves and someone who is dependent on them and living with them such as a child or partner.
- Receiving Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments in their own right as well as Employment and Support Allowance or Universal Credit in their own right.

**Evidence will be required to support the basis of the claim and the financial assistance required.**

Eligible students may receive a bursary of up to £1200, dependent on need, to support them with costs such as transport, equipment etc.

Please note that students who meet the criteria for bursaries for vulnerable groups are not automatically entitled to a bursary if they do not have financial needs and/or their financial needs are covered from other sources. There is a possibility of no award or a limited award.

Proof will be needed to evidence that a student is eligible for the bursary, for example:

- **LAC or PLAC:** written confirmation, such as a letter or an email, of current or previous LAC status from the relevant LA (the LA that looks after them or provides their leaving care services).
- **In receipt of Income Support:** a copy of the Income Support award notice, which must evidence that the student is entitled to the benefit in their own right, and confirm that the student can attend FE or training.
- **In receipt of Universal Credit:** copies of the Universal Credit award notice from the last **three months** to estimate assumed income for the year which must evidence that the student is entitled to the benefit in their own right, as well as additional documentation to confirm their independent status, e.g. a tenancy agreement in the student's name, a child benefit receipt, children's birth certificate, or utility bills.
- **In receipt of Universal Credit or ESA and Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments:** a copy of the Universal Credit or ESA award from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), as well as evidence of receipt of Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment.

The School will only submit a funding claim to the SBSS once sufficient evidence has been provided and the setting has confirmed that the student needs financial support to participate.

### **Medium priority group – Discretionary student bursary**

The School will ensure that discretionary funding is allocated to the students who are most in need of financial support. The School's eligibility criteria for receiving a discretionary bursary will include:

- Students who are completing a high-cost course (over £2,000) in which specialist equipment and clothes are required, including industry placements.
- Students living in a low-income household.
- Students who are from a single parent family or have one or more dependent siblings in their family.
- Students who have additional responsibilities, such as being a young carer or parent.
- Students who travel greater than **eight** miles to the setting.

Discretionary bursaries may be awarded for students in low-income households. The setting will use household income, in some way, to help establish the amount of support awarded to a student, if possible.

The amount awarded will be dependent on the amount of income – this will be allocated on different levels.

Students who apply will be assessed individually. This assessment will be documented, and evidence to support the claims will be obtained and retained for auditing purposes.

The assessment will be based on a student's financial needs.

The School will **not** make blanket or flat-rate payments to all students or students in the income bands outlined above without considering the actual needs of each student.

The School will use in-kind payments over cash payments for discretionary bursaries wherever possible.

The School will manage the discretionary bursary to keep payments within budget. Where possible, the setting will retain a small emergency fund from its allocation to support students who face exceptional circumstances during the year due to a change in their situation that impacts on their ability to participate in education – evidence of a student's eligibility for emergency funds, the individual assessment and their actual participation costs will be held for audit purposes as for any other bursary award.

In individual cases of severe hardship, the bursary fund will be used where appropriate to provide food support for a student on the days they attend their programme of study. Food support will be provided where the setting believes the student to be in real need, and will not require checks on household income or other evidence-gathering that would usually be required.

Where food support is provided, copies of the following records will be retained for audit purposes:

- The total number of students provided food support.
- The number of days this support is given to each student.
- The total value of support given to each student along with the rationale for its provision.
- Signed confirmation of receipt funding by the student or actual spend receipts.

Each school should exercise their discretion in each case as this scheme is not intended to continue on an ongoing basis for any individual pupil. This flexibility relates to food support only.

Whilst an application can be made at any point during the Academic Year, we would invite all students to submit applications by **Friday 12 September 2025** and we would expect to receive as part of the supporting evidence for the application detail of the following

- Household Income
- The student's actual financial needs to support their participation.

**NB All bursary awards are dependent on students meeting agreed standards of behaviour and attendance as set out in the Sixth Form Contract. This will be assessed termly and if a student's attendance falls below the expected percentage then the Bursary may be withdrawn.**

**Please return to:**

**Mr Deryk Bull, Birchwood High School, Parsonage Lane, Bishop's Stortford CM23 5BD**

**Email : dbull@birchwoodhigh.org.uk**

Student Name:- .....

would like to apply for the 16-19 Bursary Fund for the following priority group:

**High**                       **Medium**

under criteria:- .....

I enclose the following evidence as requested

*(please tick relevant box)*

**Income Support letter (no more than 28 days old) Universal Credit Award Notice or Personal Independence Payment**

**First 4 pages of your Child Tax Credit Awards letter for 2025/26 or Universal Credit Award Notice**

**Summary of Student financial needs**

Signed:- .....

Date:- .....

**Please note that all applications will be treated in the strictest confidence.**